Statewide Policy: Web Advertising and Linking

Product ID: ENT-INT-040

Effective Date: September 2002

Approved: Scott Darkenwald , Director, Department of Administration

Replaces & Supercedes: This policy supercedes any prior enterprise policies for establishing and implementing information technology (IT) policies and standards.

I.   Authorizations, Roles, & Responsibilities

Pursuant to the Montana Information Technology Act ("MITA") (Title 2, Chapter 17, Part 5 of the Montana Code Annotated ("MCA"), it is the policy of the state that information technology be used to improve the quality of life of Montana citizens, and that such improvement is to be realized by protecting individual privacy and the privacy of the information contained within the state's information technology systems. §2-17-505(1), MCA. It is also the policy of the state that the development of information technology resources be conducted in an organized, deliberative, and cost-effective manner, which necessitates the development of statewide information technology policies, standards, procedures, and guidelines applicable to all state agencies and others using the state network. It is also anticipated that State information technology systems will be developed in cooperation with the federal government and local governments with the objective of providing seamless access to information and services to the greatest degree possible. §2-17-505(2), MCA.

Department of Administration: Under MITA, the Department of Administration ("DOA") is responsible for carrying out the planning and program responsibilities for information technology for state government (except the national guard), including for establishing and enforcing a state strategic information technology plan and establishing and enforcing statewide information technology policies and standards. DOA is responsible for implementing MITA and all other laws for the use of information technology in state government. The director of DOA has appointed the chief information officer to assist in carrying out the department's information technology duties. §2-17-512, MCA.

Department Heads: Each department head is responsible for ensuring an adequate level of security for all data within their department. §2-15-114, MCA.

II. Policy - Requirements

A. Scope

This policy applies to all state computers, including the state university system, state networks, and state maintained or owned web pages, websites, and web applications.

B. Purpose

The Internet has become one of the state's most important resources to provide easy access to information and services, both internally and to the citizens and customers of the state. However, the tool presents many challenges in dealing with acceptable/appropriate use and privacy concerns. Some agencies have been requested to allow linking to private organizations, web banner advertising on state websites or creating partnerships with advertising companies to host an agency's website and subsidize the costs of operation with revenues from vendor posted web advertisements. Others have been offered software at no charge in exchange for displaying the company's icon or link on their site. These opportunities may appear desirable on the surface. There are, however, complex policy issues that arise that this policy is intended to address.

C. Requirements

1. The state will not accept banner ads and vendor hosted website advertising for the following reasons:

- The state is unable to exercise full control over banner advertisement redirects that may result in unintended consequences to the user and/or the state agency. Individuals "clicking" on a banner advertisement have little or no control of the redirect options to return the user to the original website. Re-routed advertising links can result in the user being linked to questionable or problematic websites, including those currently prohibited for state access (see ENT-SEC-121), which will negatively impact the state's image.

- Privacy violations may occur when a user accesses web advertisements. Some websites record information about users by automatically depositing a piece of information in the "cookie" file on the user's computer. The cookie helps track information communicated between the user's browser and the server (see ENT-INT-030).

- Advertising for products and/or services may be perceived by the user as being fully endorsed by the state of Montana and may increase the risk of perceived discrimination.

- The lack of accepted industry standards and guidelines regarding "best practices" in web advertising make it questionable as to how to best use this media feature to benefit the state and its citizens.

- The lack of published guidelines and specific criteria make it difficult to determine what criteria might be used to evaluate acceptable web advertising versus unacceptable advertising for the state.

2. All links from any state web page are at the sole discretion of the state through the agencies. The state will not link to organization, citizen or business websites unless one of the following conditions is met:

- The link adds appropriate value to the state site, is in the state's best interest, does not discriminate against like sites, and is relevant in content.

- The state has an active contract with the organization, the link adds appropriate value to the state site, is in the state's best interest, and is relevant in content.

- The link provides access to a website which contains software that is necessary or enhances the operation of the state site (e.g. Adobe Acrobat).

D. Background - History On The Creation Of Or Changes To This Policy

This policy was requested by the Information Technology Services Division and reviewed by the Electronic Government Advisory Council prior to adoption to address web advertising in state government.

E. Guidelines - Recommendations, Not Requirements

No guidelines as implementation of web banner ads and web advertising is prohibited. Guidelines for linked sites are contained within the Requirements.

F. Change Control and Exceptions

Policy changes or exceptions are governed by the Procedure for Establishing and Implementing Statewide Information Technology Policies and Standards. Requests for a review or change to this policy are made by submitting an Action Request form. Requests for exceptions are made by submitting an Exception Request form. Changes to policies and standards will be prioritized and acted upon based on impact and need.

III. Close

For questions or comments about this instrument, contact the Information Technology Services Division at ITSD Service Desk, or:

Chief Information Officer
PO Box 200113
Helena, MT 59620-0113
(406) 444-2700
FAX: (406) 444-2701

IV. Cross-Reference Guide

A. State/Federal Laws

- 2-17-505(1) – Policy
- 2-17-514(1) – Enforcement

B. State Policies (IT Policies, MOM Policies, ARM Policies)

- 2-15-112, MCA
- 2-17-534, MCA
- 2-17-550 through 2-17-553, MCA
- Internet Services Policy, ENT-INT-011
- ARM 2.13.101 - 2.13.107 - Regulation of Communication Facilities
- MOM 3-0130 Discipline
- ARM 2.12.206 Establishing Policies, Standards, Procedures and Guidelines.

C. IT Procedures or Guidelines Supporting this Policy

- Policy: Establishing and Implementing Statewide Information Technology Policies and Standards
- Procedure: Establishing and Implementing Statewide Information Technology Policies and Standards

V. Administrative Use

Product ID:	ENT-INT-040
Proponent:	Scott Darkenwald , Director, Department of Administration
Version:	1.1
Approved Date:	July 15, 2008
Effective Date:	September 2002
Change & Review Contact:	ITSD Service Desk
Review Criteria:	Event Review: Any event affecting this policy may initiate a review. Such events may include a change in statute, key staff changes or a request for review or change.
Scheduled Review Date:	July 1, 2013
Last Review/Revision:	Reviewed July 11, 2008. Non-material changes are necessary.

Change Record:	July 11, 2008 – Non-material changes made:
	
	   - Standardize instrument format and common components.
	
	   - Changed to reflect next review date.